DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 718 TM 860 598

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TITLE Beyond the Questionnaires and the Data: Developing a Model of Faculty Evaluation.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *Evaluation Methods; *Evaluation Problems; Evaluation Utilization; Higher Education; *Measurement Objectives; Models; Research Needs; *Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; *Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Issues concerning students' evaluation of college faculty are discussed. Several views of this process are presented. Having identified relevant variables or paradigms, possible relationships between the variables can be studied (models and theories). The assumptions underlying these paradigms include the following: that students have a right and an obligation to evaluate their faculty; the questionnaires are valid; faculty have a right to feedback; evaluation should be separate from diagnosis; faculty should have input concerning dissemination of results, norms, questions asked, and weighting of items; qualitative comments and other sources of data should be used; past results must be confidential; and teachers' goals should be discussed. Three paradigms are explained and charted. The first paradigm describes the process of evaluation, identifying relevant variables (research, development, application, feedback, deliberation, and decisions). The second paradigm elaborates one of the variables--types of feedback, both evaluative and diagnostic--in terms of reviewers (students, self, peers, or administrators), and methods (papers, student achievement, interviews, observation, videotaping, questionnaires, and course syllabi). The third--on research and development--restates the first paradigm to show the progress and sequence of the evaluation process. More effort is recommended in developing procedures for all phases of the evaluation process and followup action, and in providing due process in the use of faculty evaluation data. (GDC)

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Beyond the Questionnaires and the Data:
Developing a Model of Faculty Evaluation

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Recent research on student evaluations of classroom teaching at the post secondary level has been very productive. Whether on internal validity or the relevance of equilibrium theory to the modification of instruction, efforts to improve the evaluation of teaching have provided more confidence and integrity to the activity. In a period of increased litigation involving personnel decisions, such advances are crucial for legal as well as professional and pedagogical reasons. The legal ramifications of classroom evaluation also give additional impetus to the need for research on the "rest of the story" -- the other aspects and phases of instructional evaluation such as the selection of questionnaires and the provision for check back procedures. (Independent of the legal motivation of course, the proper development of faculty evaluation programs requires such research.)

Thus, for these reasons I believe that we must develop new models of faculty evaluation which identify and highlight these other aspects so that they can be studied systematically. Of course, constructing useful models is a long, careful research effort, and the scope of this discussion is limited to a presentation of several paradigmatic views of the process. Having identified relevant variables (paradigms), possible relationships between such variables can be studied (models and theories). The discussion is intended to provide several frames of reference on faculty evaluation, especially ones which reflect a chronological view of evaluation which appears to be embodied in professional/pedagogical and legal discussions of the matter. Such paradigms may help to better describe and integrate the various steps of faculty evaluation in complementary ways.

There are several principles of the evaluation of post secondary teaching which are reflected in the paradigms below. They are:

1. Students in postsecondary institutions have both a right and an obligation to provide teachers with evaluative and diagnostic information about their classroom instruction. Evaluation of teaching by the client is a proper and logical activity. It is justified apart from any empirical evidence as to the degree of evaluations' construct validity and/or degree of impact on faculty teaching. That is, one of the most important attributes of such programs is the role that they play in representing students who would otherwise be unable to give meaningful feedback to programs affecting them.
2. There is a sufficient body of supportive empirical research about questionnaires' construct validity and about their positive effects on teacher behavior to support teaching evaluation programs. Much of this work is from research on dissonance and equilibrium theory.
3. Student evaluations of classroom teaching should be centrally administered to provide reliable and neutral logistical arrangements.
4. Faculty members have a right to receive student feedback from a program responsive to the need for careful and systematic administration, analysis, and reporting of teaching evaluations.
5. Individual teachers and their departments should be able to ask their own questions to complement the universal questions asked of all teachers across the institution.
6. Assessment should be separated into evaluative (judgmental) and diagnostic components.

7. Faculty members should decide to whom the results are to be sent. The choices should include having them returned to themselves, and/or to deans or department heads, and/or to be made public, as in student guides. In addition, there should be a place to indicate approval for use of the data for research purposes.
8. Qualitative information from students should be obtained to complement quantitatively based questionnaires. It should be released to the instructor only, and only after final grades for a term are turned in to the registrar's office.
9. Past results must be kept confidential, accessible only upon written request of the instructor.
10. Faculty members should be allowed to weight the various items on the survey in order to reflect their appropriateness and/or importance to the class.
11. All faculty should participate, at least periodically, in order to develop and maintain norms for a variety of categories (rank, experience, etc.)
12. All appropriate constituencies of the faculty member should be represented in the review process to provide diverse frames of reference. No one source of information should be used to make assessments about teaching performance or potential.
13. The review process should be careful, painstaking, and exhaustive, especially when teaching evaluations are used for personnel decisions. Review and discussion by many people with different frames of reference at several levels is the best assurance that some semblance of validity will emerge. Finally, a check back procedure should be mandatory when evaluations are not supportive, so that additional information can be provided by the teacher.

14. Discussions about teaching goals should occur both before and after academic terms or evaluation periods so that the faculty member can make explicit his/her expectations for the class and for the way it will be taught.

These principles address various aspects and phases of the evaluation process. Arranging them in paradigms may help to see how, when, and if they are embodied in present programs of student evaluation and faculty development. Doing so may make it easier to note the areas requiring research attention, as will be shown below.

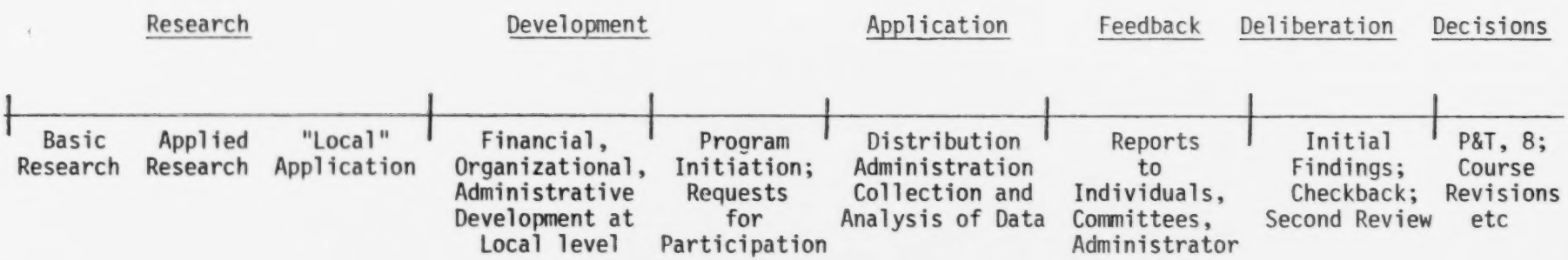
Firts, three sample paradigms. The first is intended to help identify relevant variables. The second is an example of elaborating on a variable, in this case the Development phase of Paradigm One. The third is an example of transforming the first type to show the progress and sequence of evaluation and development activities.

With an understanding of the research on student evaluations of classroom performance of faculty, and by studying the variables contained in the three research paradigms, one is ready to identify areas for study and to draw some general hypotheses about faculty evaluation. For example:

Hypothesis: Given the principles above, many programs do not appear to have spent enough effort developing reliable administration procedures. As McKnight and Cashin (1981) note, there appears to be a lack of attention to such things as giving common, correct instructions to students, collecting completed forms systematically, etc.

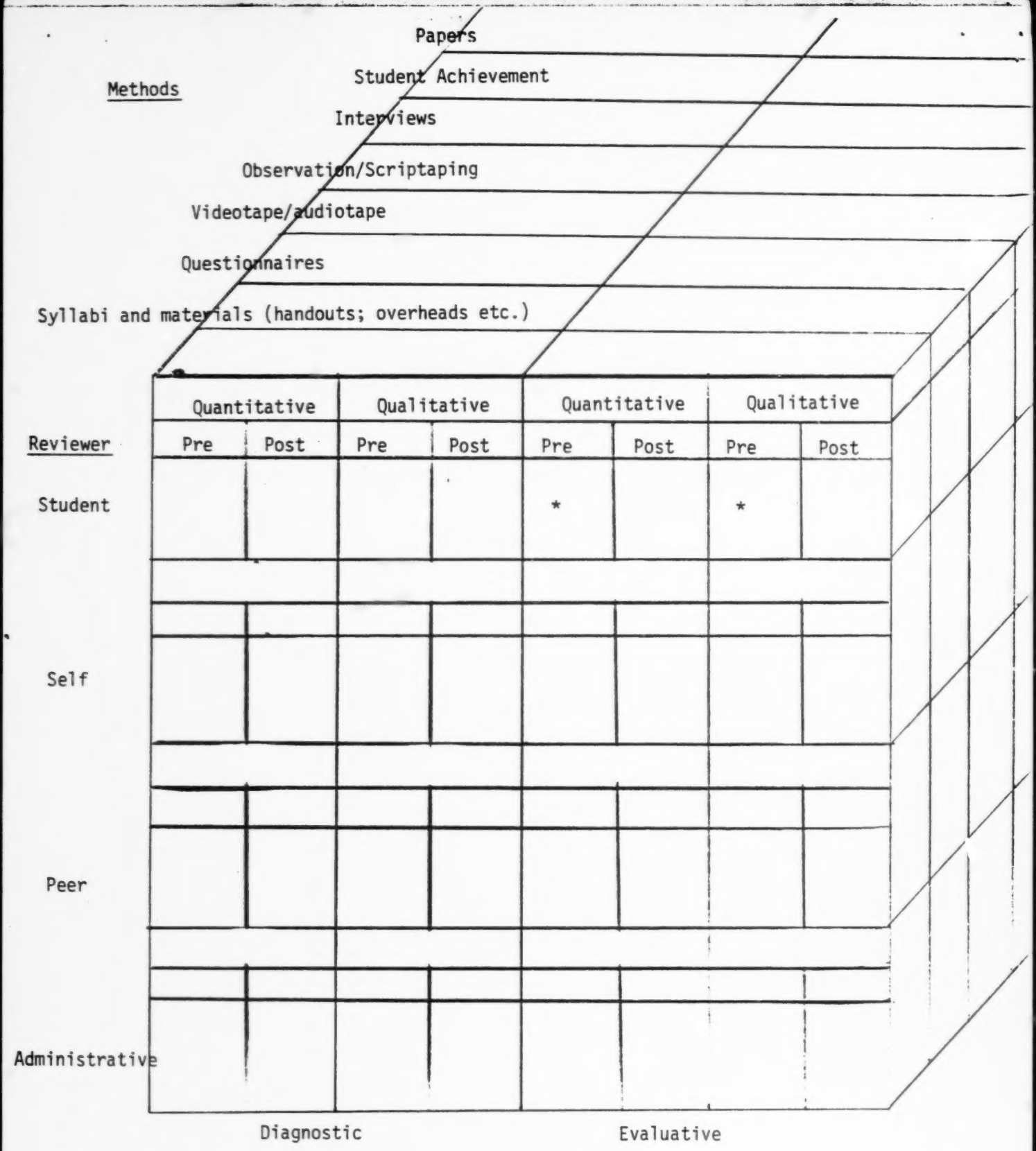
Hypothesis: Once available for committee review, student ratings may be given cursory and/or unreliable reviews by, for example, promotion and tenure committees.

Hypothesis: There appears to be little systematic effort to the



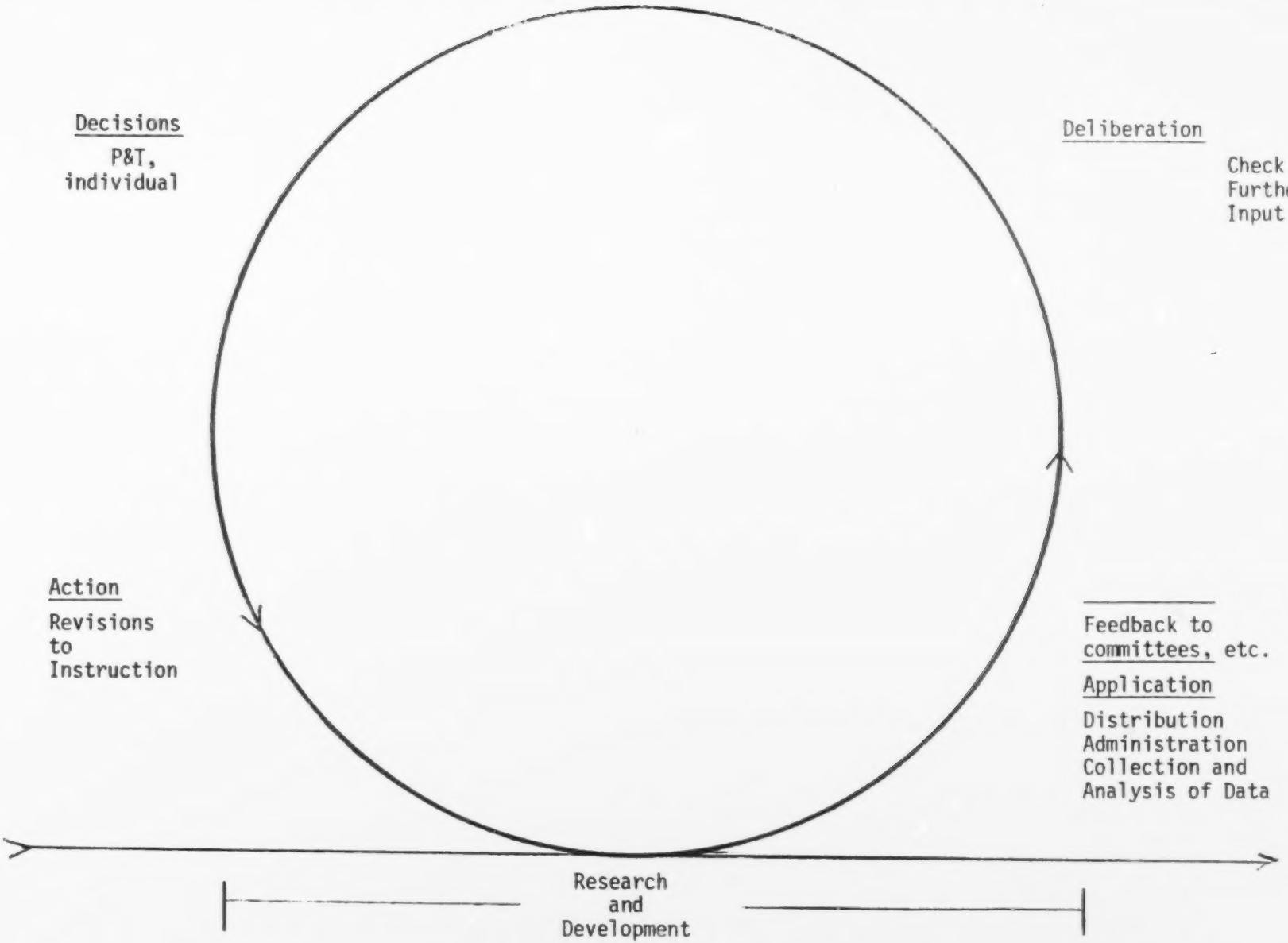
The Process of Evaluation

Paradigm I



* = Not appropriate

Paradigm 2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Collection and
Analysis of Data
Research
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Development

evaluation with development in many programs. If equilibrium theory is predictive, faculty members must be given assistance and/or resources to encourage and/or enable them to make the changes suggested by information on student evaluations. In short, are programs giving equilibrium theory a chance? In the event that "things don't happen", the effort might at least give insights into such phenomena as excuses as described by Snyder, Higgins, and Stuckey (1983).

Observation: In sum, we are either blind to the "big picture" (Paradigm One) and have been too enamored with instrumentation, or we have not taken the complete process seriously. The review of the paradigms suggests to me that it is the latter, because there have been faculty development efforts before. In recent years, support for them has waned. Even where still present, there does not seem to be significant program or research ties between evaluation and development or any of the other variables. Research on the impact of a more complete program might lend support to, and help secure resources for, more normative studies, more instructional development awards, training of students to administer forms, etc. It might also support the value of training faculty members of personnel committees how to interpret "the printout," as well as the value of giving them released time for their crucial work.

The above hypotheses and observations can be categorized under the title "The process of faculty evaluation and development". Many others can be derived from the paradigms. This particular one was chosen because it reflects the concern I have that our evaluation programs do not reflect the tenets of due process, as mentioned earlier.

As I understand the concept of due process, the judiciary, in cases brought before it having to do with evaluations of personnel seems to be concerned that

such programs have clear and carefully followed procedures. They do not challenge the accuracy of data. They are interested in such questions as: were good questionnaire construction methods followed? Were students allowed to respond anonymously? Was the administration of questionnaires reasonably standardized? In general, the counts ask whether or not a group of reasonable individuals acting in a non-discriminatory manner could have reached a certain decision. These assumptions are the basis of my concern, and the impetus for recommending the studies mentioned above. The relation of the instrument to the process is succinctly summarized by Cashin:

> "A student evaluation form is a mechanical tool, and therefore responds in a static fashion. Individuals and teaching situations are dynamic. Therefore before results can help they must be interpreted (i.e.) applied to the individual and setting." (1976)

In sum, I believe that we need to develop, and use, paradigms of faculty evaluation which will help to understand the interaction and importance of all phases of the evaluation - development continuum. One impetus for such work stemming from the nature of the legal concept of due process, has been discussed.

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